



Department of Justice

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HOGSETT ANNOUNCES CONVICTIONS IN PROSECUTION OF DRUG RING OPERATED FROM INDIANA PRISONS

Indiana prisoners allegedly smuggled cell phones, received assistance from guards

PRESS RELEASE

INDIANAPOLIS – Joseph H. Hogsett, the United States Attorney, announced today the conviction and sentencing of two defendants as part of a prosecution involving 40 individuals across Indiana who allegedly operated a large drug trafficking ring at the direction of inmates within Indiana correctional facilities. In hearings before U.S. District Judge Sarah Evans Barker, defendant Russell Yerden, age 45, was sentenced to 327 months (27 years, 3 months) in federal prison, and Michael Foley, age 32, was sentenced to 300 months (25 years) in federal prison.

“This prosecution involves allegations that, for more than a year, inmates orchestrated an illicit business from their prison cells that flooded the state with dangerous drugs,” said Hogsett. “These convictions and sentencing decisions are testament to our dedication to shutting off these drug pipelines and protecting Indiana neighborhoods.”

According to the charging document filed in 2012, the drug trafficking operation was largely run by Oscar Perez, age 27, a prisoner who at the time was incarcerated at the Westville Control Unit in Westville. He was assisted by Justin “Big J” Addler, age 28, who at the time was incarcerated at the Wabash Valley Correctional Facility in Carlisle. The indictment also alleges drug trafficking between Addler and Charles Cole, age 40, an inmate in the Pendleton Correctional Facility.

Defendants Yerden and Foley were both charged with conspiring with these prisoners to possess methamphetamine with the intent to distribute it. The indictment cites telephone conversations between Yerden and other drug traffickers discussing the transportation of methamphetamine from Elkhart to Indianapolis. Foley was similarly cited as having helped arrange for methamphetamine to be distributed to lower-level drug traffickers.

The indictment alleges that Perez and Addler would utilize the smuggled cell phones to

oversee and facilitate large purchases of methamphetamine from sources of supply in California. Those drugs would then be shipped to Indiana through the mail or with couriers. At times, with the assistance of a corrections officer, they would then smuggle those drugs, cell phones, and other materials to inmates incarcerated within the Indiana Department of Correction.

Beyond those activities undertaken within Indiana correctional facilities, the indictment further describes significant drug trafficking in communities across Central Indiana. These include transactions in Indianapolis, Noblesville, Crawfordsville, Lafayette, New Castle, and Elkhart. This included the purchase and sale of quantities of methamphetamine, heroin, PCP and/or LSD.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Barry D. Glickman, who is prosecuting this case for the government, both defendants were also sentenced to years of federally-supervised release at the end of their prison term.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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